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## Social change

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# SOCIAL CHANGE

By Alexander Sandeen

What do you think of when you hear “mid-western town”? According to the U.S. Census in 2016, the average Midwest town would be predominately white (76%) and its citizens would only be capable of speaking a single language, that being English (89%).

Having grown up near a town whose highest population has been around 9,000, this description has been pretty spot on. Traditionally, the area I lived in has been almost exclusively populated by European settlers and a historic African American community, but that has changed dramatically in the past few decades. To put it into perspective, I have known individuals since I was a child

who have roots in Vietnam, Laos, Korea, Mexico, Central America, India, and Malaysia, all within 35 miles of each other.

While my rural town may be a special case, these changes are continuing nationally. NPR reported that all demographics have grown in population between the years of 2015-2016.

What has sparked some interest has been the decrease of non-Hispanic whites by 163,330. According to Bill Chappell of NPR, despite this decrease, non-Hispanic whites still remain the dominant demographic at 198 million. These types of changes aren’t anything new as the US has been a country whose society has been a

“melting-pot” of cultures, foods, religions, and peoples.

While the United States grows to become more diverse, there begs a question. Are their voices being heard?

In a Pew Research study conducted in 2015, it was observed that the 114th congress was the most diverse congress that had ever been assembled. In this time, non-white representatives held 17% of the seats in Congress, whose share of the electorate is 38% of the total US. In comparison, the membership in Congress of non-white representatives was 6% out of 20% of the national population in 1981. Historically, Congress hasn’t been one to

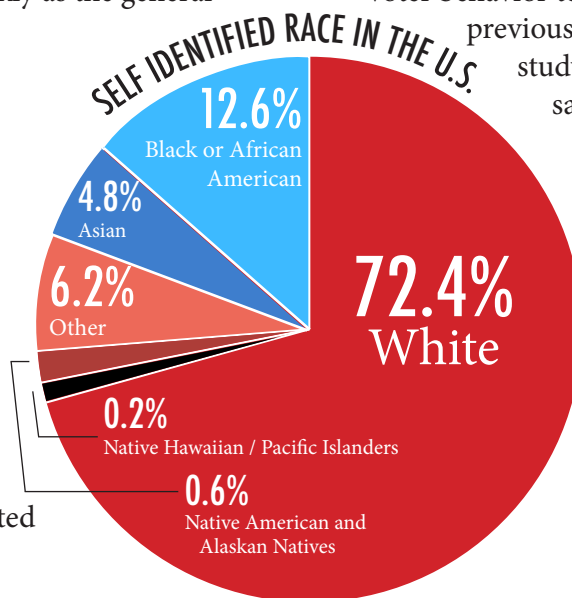
Historically, Congress hasn't been one to reflect these types of changes as quickly as the general population.

An explanation for this occurrence has been the record of voter turn outs in the past. Since the midterm elections in 1986, the white share of the voting population has begun to decrease from 85% of the electorate to slightly below 74%.

Though, according to the United States Elections Project, there has been decline. The voter turnout for whites did rise during the midterm elections for the Obama administration, more than previous administrations. Even as the white share of the electorate has decreased, white representation has been overrepresented.

Along with a large population, the white population has, historically, had a higher percentage of voter turnout. Of most elections, the white demographic has maintained a higher voter turnout on both Presidential and midterm elections. It wasn't until the first and second term African American voters surpassed white turnout by reaching 70% on the first election and roughly 68% on the second, each reaching an approximate 5% above white turn out.

Looking at previous elections, both African American and white turnouts have had similar and proportionally higher than



any other demographic. As the largest non-white demographic, Hispanics have not had a large voting turnout as you would expect. Along with other demographics, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, etc. the Hispanic population has not been able to mobilize enough to even receive 50% turn out of the community.

Bernard L. Fraga from Indiana University conducted research which studied elections to better understand how a such a diverse state such as America could ever experience low voter turn outs has. Fraga observed Hispanic and African American voter turnout data from 2006, 2008, and 2010, finding voter behavior to be a bit more complex than

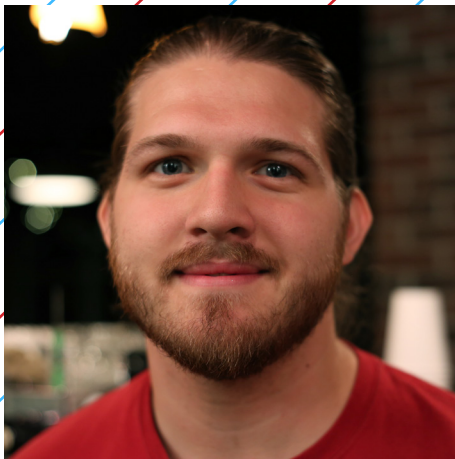
turnout data from 2006, 2008, and 2010, finding voter behavior to be a bit more complex than previously thought. According to the study, if a candidate were from the same racial or ethnic group as either Hispanic or African American, it would not likely inspire a larger voter turnout.

What actually brings more electorate participation in Hispanic and African American communities has been when each group had a majority in its electorate.

Community politics in non-white communities has been crucial in order to keep their voice heard, however, it is still important to remember that by sheer number, the white community still holds the majority and has been vital for elections, notably the 2016 Presidential election.

In an article written by the Washington Post Editorial Board, even as harsh and blunt, derogatory verbiage was used by candidate Donald Trump to alienate ethnic and racial groups, it succeeded because of its large white support.

Regardless of differences between the Trump campaign and minorities, the white share of the votes would have overshadowed other ethnic and racial groups. After completing an approximate calculation using voter turnout data from Dr. McDonald of the University of Florida and population data reported by Mr. Chappell



**EVAN KOEHLER**  
Peoria, IL | German & Irish



**J'HAIRA RHODES**  
Dallas, Texas | Puerto Rican, & Black.



**KRISTEN**  
Meridian, MS



**ANGIE ESPINOZA**  
Des Moines, IA | El Salvadorian



**ELISSA EPPENS**  
Batavia, IA | German, Scottish, English, & Welsh

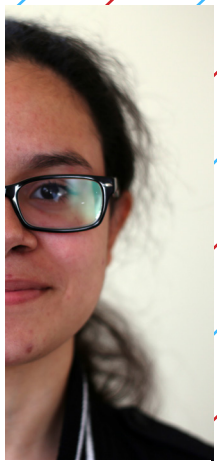


**SHARON**  
Ankeny, IA

of NPR, there would have been a difference of 74,745,000 between the number of whites to African Americans and Hispanics combined. It's clear that white communities have still maintained a large portion of the vote. It has also become apparent that such a victory was aided by an aging population. Hansi Lo Wang from NPR reported that the cause of this increase has been the aging baby boomers. This reflects data from a Pew Research study conducted by Renee Stepler which found 22% of white adults saw

African Americans are treated fairly, compared to 64% of black adults that say they are not. As relations between older whites and minorities have shown to have come to odds on occasion, the youth from both white and nonwhite groups have been supporting movements that promote equal treatment of minorities. The Pew Research explained that roughly six out of ten white adults younger than 30 express support for social movements, such as Black Lives Matter while 65% of the general African American community

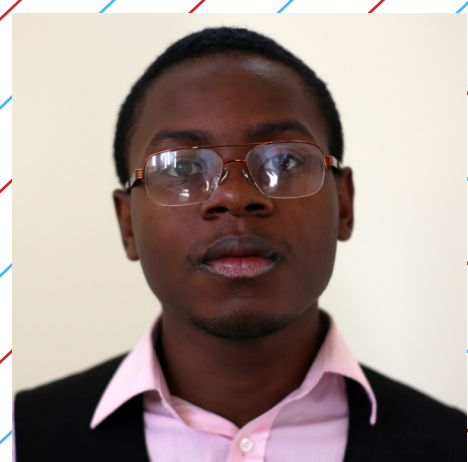




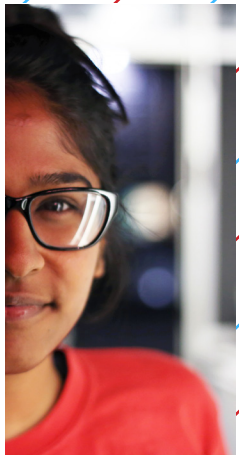
**ENRIQUEZ**  
Puerto Rican



**HANG NGUYEN**  
Marion, IA | Vietnamese & White



**DOZMEN LEE**  
Davenport, IA | Black



**JOHN**  
Indian



**LUKE WILSON**  
Ames, IA | German & French



**JORDAN ARMISTEAD**  
Minot, ND | Panamanian, Black, & Italian

supports its cause (African American individuals between the ages of 18-29 have given the most support, 52%) (Stepler). Though the last election cycle did show inequalities of representation, it shows that activism and awareness has grown between the differences in both white and nonwhite communities.

Even in traditionally Euro-American communities, communities are becoming more diverse than they have been historically.

These changes have brought to light questions about representation, barriers to participation, and community action which have been revisited since the last presidential election. It is undeniable that America has grown in its diversity and complexity, but it is up to its citizens to resolve lingering issues with inclusion.